

### *Voting at more convenient time will increase voter turnout*

Washington, D.C.— Today, U.S. Congressmen Steve Israel (D-NY) and John Larson (D-CT) announced legislation to change Election Day from the first Tuesday in November to the first full weekend, thereby making it more convenient for voters and increasing voter turnout.

Rep. Israel said, "Voting should be easy and accessible. This is why, in 1845, Congress decided that voting on a Tuesday made sense. It was the easiest day for farmers in our agrarian society to get to the polls. But times have changed, and Tuesday voting just doesn't make sense anymore. By moving Election Day from a single day in the middle of the work week to a full weekend, we are encouraging more working Americans to participate. Our democracy will be best served when our leaders are elected by as many Americans as possible."

Rep. Larson said, "As a representative democracy, voting is a fundamental responsibility for all Americans and the system should be as accessible as possible for as many as possible. Unfortunately, the system we have now was designed to meet our country's needs over 160 years ago and it no longer makes any sense. It's time we stop making people choose between exercising their responsibility to vote, and meeting their everyday obligations."

The Weekend Voting Act would allow for national polls to be open from 10 a.m. (Eastern Time) Saturday to 6 p.m. (ET) Sunday in the 48 contiguous states. Election officials would be permitted to close polls during the overnight hours if they determine it would be inefficient to keep them open.

The long-standing tradition of holding federal elections on the first Tuesday of November began with an act of Congress in 1845. Tuesday was selected for its comparative convenience because it was a designated "court day" and the day in which land-owners would typically be in town to conduct business. The tradition was based on the then-agrarian American society.

Currently, most polls are open only 12 hours (from 7 a.m. to 7 p.m.) for one day. As seen in the 2008 and 2004 elections and primaries, long lines in many polling places kept voters waiting longer than one or two hours. Voter turnout in the United States has long lagged behind similar

democracies around the world. Only 47 percent of eligible voters actually voted in the United States. In Italy, where voting takes place on the weekends, 92 percent of eligible voters voted.

Ambassador Andrew Young, Chairman of the Board of Why Tuesday?, a 501c3 non-partisan organization founded in 2005 to find solutions to increase voter turnout and participation in elections, said, "I want to commend Reps. Israel and Larson for their steadfast commitment to the issue of voting rights and protecting the right to vote. Through the challenging times of the sixties I worked alongside our nation's leaders on both side the aisle, and of course Dr. King, to remove barriers to the franchise. Moving Election Day from Tuesday to Saturday and Sunday would be an extraordinary step to make sure all Americans have the opportunity to make their voices heard."

Norman J. Ornstein, Why Tuesday? Board Member and Resident Scholar said, "Americans vote at a rate far behind most nations in the world -- we rank 138th of 172 countries. Of the G8 nations, we rank dead last in voter turnout and five of the seven nations that vote ahead of us vote on a weekend or national holiday. Despite convenience voting options for Americans in 35 states, in 15 states voting is Tuesday-or-bust. It's time to make this common-sense change to our voting system."